



The ladder of participation

The activities here can be run with groups of young people or adults. They are designed to help people look at the nature of how young people are involved in events, or issues that concern them, and to be open to alternative procedures and behaviours that involve young people more democratically and meaningfully.

Warning: The topic may excite indignation and anger amongst pupils, therefore, it is essential to manage the discussion in an appropriate way – people learn to be democratic when treated democratically.

These activities have a specialist vocabulary: Assign, consulted, decoration, directed, informed, manipulation, participate, tokenism, initiated. Pupils could look up the words in a dictionary and then write a sentence which shows they understand what the words mean. If their sentences had to be about children and their relationship with adults this would provide a good warm-up to the activity.

Materials: Copies of the diagram 'ladder of participation' on page 12, either one between two or one for each student. Copies of the eight 'participation' cards, on pages 10 and 11, for each group. They need to be cut along the dotted lines.

activity one

Learning about the ladder of participation

Participants form groups of two, three or four. Give each group at least one copy of the ladder diagram, and a set of the 8 'participation' cards cut along the dotted lines. Participants read each of the 'participation' cards then place them on the ladder after discussing whether the children or young people described in the situation card have any understanding of the issues, why they are involved and what they are doing. The placing of each card on the ladder should depend on the degree of genuine participation and consultation.

activity two

Relating the ladder of participation to your pupils' experience

Pupils make their own **Situation cards**, using experiences they have had. This could either be done in pairs, with each pair being asked to do one; or as a class with a brainstorm, then groups taking one of the examples and making a situation card. Pupils situation cards are then placed on an enlarged 'ladder'. It should not matter if all the rungs are not matched with an experience. This could be displayed.

activity three

How can young people participate more?

Pupils discuss how they can participate more equally, without being rude or upsetting adults, in school or the community.

Ladder of participation situation cards

A **Situation:** A school was asked to provide a young person to represent the school on a panel which was going to discuss changes to the local park.

Action taken: The Head teacher hurriedly chose a pupil who was always neatly dressed and well behaved, but who actually lived out of the area.



B **Situation:** A TV company wanted advice and ideas for kids' television programmes.

Action taken: A Year 7 class spent a whole morning with people from the TV company. A few weeks later the TV company returned to show the class their ideas and to again ask their opinion.



C **Situation:** Parents from your town joined a demonstration in London which was asking for more nursery places for their pre-school children.

Action taken: They took their young children, and gave them placards to carry which had slogans like 'I want to go to school'.



D **Situation:** The Mayor had to provide dinner and entertainment for 50 important people who were attending a conference in the town.

Action taken: The choir from a local school, which had won competitions, was asked to sing for them at the reception.



Ladder of participation situation cards

E Situation: A local council brought in planners to upgrade a housing estate.

Action taken: Everyone on the estate was invited to a meeting to discuss how to make things better for everyone. They especially wanted to know what children of all ages wanted, and set up working groups of kids to work with the planners.



F Situation: Some students in Year 8 heard about peer mediation* as a way of dealing with conflicts in school. They wanted to set up a similar scheme in their school.

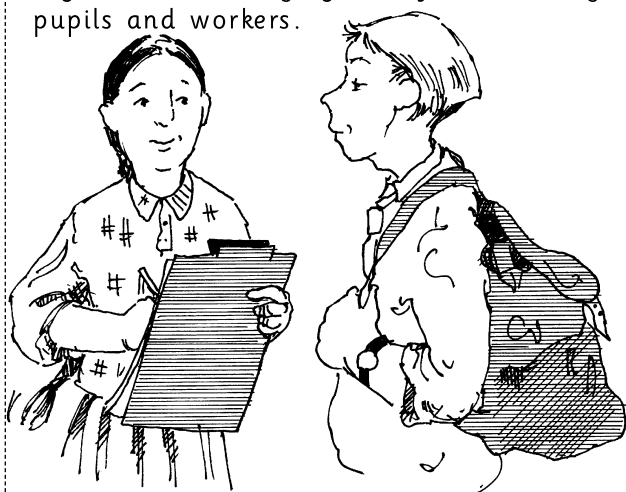
Action taken: First they told other students about the scheme. Then they took it to the school council where the teacher representatives agreed and helped Y8 students set up a scheme.



*Peer mediation is the training of students to help other students work out solutions to their arguments and conflicts.

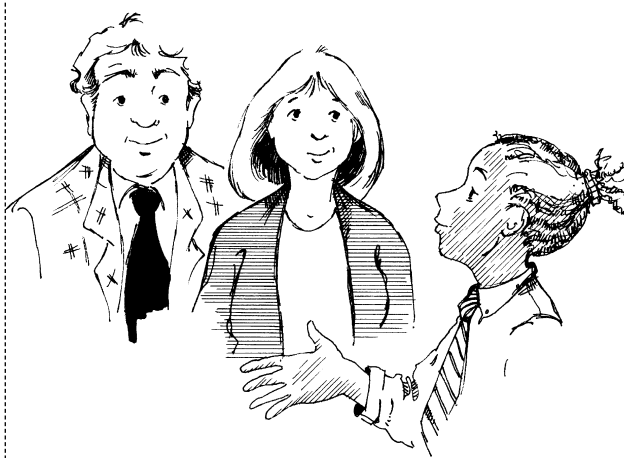
G Situation: A school wanted to improve break and lunchtime facilities for its pupils.

Action taken: A school election was held and pupils were asked to nominate candidates for a committee which then found out what pupils wanted. They then organised the carrying out of the work by pupils and workers.



H Situation: A school needed some of its pupils to take important visitors round the building and asked their Year 8 pupils to help.

Action taken: Year 8 pupils realised that the visitors could make an important difference to the school facilities. They were happy to show the visitors round.



Ladder of participation diagram

